



Schoppman: Software spurs success

If Eric Schoppman seems overly bullish on the value of estimating software, his track record explains why. Today, his estimating team can complete a job in one week. It used to take three.

A 25-year veteran of the construction industry, Schoppman remembers the days when he would use pads and calculators to monitor jobs. He has come a long way since, and today he uses Timberline software to power his growing business.

Eighteen years ago, while employed at Batson-Cook Company, Schoppman grew tired of estimating jobs by hand. Searching for a better way, he bought his first software – Super Calc. He realized soon after, however, that the system was bulky and cumbersome. So he embarked on another search, this time committed to finding the best product the market had to offer.

After an exhaustive review Schoppman narrowed his choices to Timberline and MC (squared symbol). He chose Timberline, and he has not looked back since. When Schoppman formed his own company 10 years ago -- Schoppman Company, Inc. -- he knew he wanted to use Timberline for his estimating work. He called Timberline reseller the Strategies Group in Atlanta, who, under the lead of sales representative Craig Trussell, created a package customized to Schoppman's approach to estimating. The Schoppman team uses the software to create estimates on projects ranging between \$1 million and \$5 million in the retail, medical and office sectors across the Southeast.

Today, Schoppman's team of five estimators uses the Timberline Estimator to bid on an average of one project a week. They use it for every facet of a bid – reviewing plans, arranging for subcontractors, doing a survey, and then completing the proposal. In total, the team commits an average of 40 hours per project. Before they used Timberline, the process would take up to three weeks.

Schoppman's team has turned to the Strategies Group to maximize use of the tool. For example, they have learned to use an on-screen take-off to update bids, rather than printing out drawings and using a digitizer board to make the updates. This enables the team to save about one-half to one-third the time spent on each bid. More importantly, it results in a better product.

“We use the take off when we make presentations to owners,” Schoppman said. “The tool enables us to show the drawings in greater detail. And after the surveys are done, we can fine-tune our work.”

Schoppman hopes to devote more time to experimenting with the Timberline Estimator. One feature that intrigues him is a modeling program that can be used to achieve even more efficiencies in the estimating process.

Schoppman says that as much as his team draws value from the Timberline program, his subcontractors can derive even more benefit. Most of his subcontractors bid on three jobs a day, and can therefore reap huge efficiencies with the software.

“This is a great system for both builders and subcontractors,” he said. “The more estimating a company does, the more they stand to gain from using the Timberline Estimator.”

Schoppman had used Timberline’s accounting software before he started his company. He said that he found the system useful, and that at some point he may return to it.

“We’re taking a hard look at adding other Timberline products,” he said. “There are many benefits to having a seamless software program to manage your entire business.”

Schoppman has also been pleased with the support his team has received from the Strategies Group. He recently called representative Craig Trussell when, due to server constraints, Schoppman was unable to gain access so that everyone could use the system at the same time. At the expense of the Strategies Group, Trussell sent an expert who figured out a swift and painless way to resolve the issue.

“That is typical of the support we receive from the Strategies Group,” Schoppman observed. “Every time we have needed something, they have been there for us.”

